

question;" but there is nothing in it, and no change in the situation. M. Flourens, indeed, dropped such a thin mask as there once was. When the British Chargé d'Affaires asked him to name a date for the evacuation of the islands, he practically said that the French would only name a date for going out of the New Hebrides when England named a date for going out of Egypt.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

Enclosures.

[Extract from the *Times*, Saturday, 13th August, 1887.]

HOUSE OF LORDS.—THE NEW HEBRIDES.

The Marquis of SALISBURY.—I observe that the noble Earl opposite (Lord Rosebery) has put down on the Paper for next week a notice which will involve discussion as to the New Hebrides. I do not wish to contest the parliamentary right of the noble Lord to bring that question forward—in fact, under some circumstances it might be his duty to do so—but, perhaps, without going further into details, I should say that I think that serious public inconvenience would result from a discussion on this question at this time. I would, therefore, endeavour to persuade the noble Earl to withdraw his notice.

The Earl of ROSEBERY.—I have not the slightest hesitation whatever in replying at once to the appeal of the noble Marquis. Any one who sees the notice I have put upon the Paper will easily perceive that it is by no means my intention to embarrass Her Majesty's Government. If I took the view of the noble Lord the President of the Council as to our numerical powers, it would be impossible under any circumstances to embarrass Her Majesty's Government; but, without entering into that, I may at once say that my one and only object in putting that notice on the Paper was to strengthen the hands of Her Majesty's Government in dealing with what is a grave difficulty indeed. If I had brought it on I should simply have recapitulated circumstances already well known to your Lordships, the arrangement with regard to the New Hebrides having been entered into some time ago, and pledges constantly conveyed to the late Government by the French Government. But there is no use in doing that if in any way it would injure the progress of negotiations. I am delighted to hear it stated that those negotiations have arrived at such a stage as to render discussion undesirable. I do not know whether before we disperse for the holidays the noble Marquis may be able to make any official statement on the matter, but I do hope that when we assemble next year we shall know that an occupation has come to an end which has ceased, in my opinion, to have any justification at all.

[Extract from the *Post*, Tuesday, 16th August, 1887.]

Not long since we pointed out in these columns the anxiety felt by the Australasian Colonies in the matter of the continued presence of French troops in the New Hebrides, and to some extent anticipated the question put by Lord Rosebery to the Marquis of Salisbury in the House of Lords a fortnight ago. The reply of the Prime Minister on that occasion to the late Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Mr. Gladstone's Government, if it did not altogether embody the subject-matter of the article in question, at any rate agreed with the salient points therein expressed. Not only did Lord Salisbury sympathize with Lord Rosebery in his inability to disguise the fact that "there existed a feeling of great apprehension with regard to the continued presence of the French on these islands," but the Prime Minister looked upon "this continued occupancy with regret," although unable to say that the French Government held "any language on the subject" to which we might take exception. Our diplomatic representatives have fully called the attention of the French Cabinet to the gravity with which the matter is regarded, both in this country and the colonies, and Lord Salisbury has reason to hope that "before long the expressed opinions of the French Government, which are entirely correct, may be translated into practice." We share with the Prime Minister his evident desire to alleviate public feeling on a subject which so deeply concerns Her Majesty's Australasian Colonies, and are relieved to find from the result of the suggestion made to Lord Rosebery in the House of Lords on Friday night that there is at last some prospect of an approaching settlement. At the same time we must demur to any negotiations which may be in progress between this country and France relative to matters connected with the management or neutralisation of the Suez Canal being made the cause of any delay in arriving at a satisfactory conclusion in respect to the New Hebrides difficulty. The French Government have, Lord Salisbury tells us, expressed a wish to treat the two questions "side by side," a wish to which Her Majesty's Government offer "no objection." Here we are reluctantly compelled, from the information before us, to express a contrary opinion to that given by Her Majesty's Advisers. There exists a very signal objection to the negotiations in regard to the Suez Canal being taken "side by side" with the negotiations relating to the withdrawal of French troops from the New Hebrides, as, even if the one is not allowed to interfere with the other, the probability of delay creeps in, and were we to acquiesce in this expression of feeling on the part of the French Government we should at the same time be giving our opponents the opportunity of playing another card of the same colour which since the beginning of the game has proved so successful a suit so far as they are concerned.

We cannot forget the result of dragging the negotiations concerning the settlement of the Newfoundland fisheries dispute into the diplomatic dealings that in 1882 took place between this country and France relative to the action of the French Government in the matter of hoisting the tricolour in the Island of Raiatea. The two questions, although having nothing whatever to do with one another, were taken "side by side," and delay after delay occurred, until at last public attention waned in respect to the latter unconstitutional act, and the French were allowed to remain in possession of an island which, in 1847, by a treaty entered into between Lord Palmerston and